WHIRRAKEE

June 2011 Vol. 32 No. 5

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2010 - 2011

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer	0409 162627
Junior Vice President	*position vacant*	
Secretary	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Minute Secretary	Joy Clusker/Rod Orr	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*	
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Diana Collier (an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Stuart Fraser, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Bill Holsworth, Bev Culvenor, John Lindner, Kerrie Norris.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: meets occasionally (by prior arrangement) in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 32, No. 5, June 2011

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
This is a special edition of Whirrakee *as it marks the 20th year of production under the same editor! I want to thank Tom Burton in this context, without whom I would never have got involved in this job and Rod Orr, without whom the magazine would surely have to go to a 'quarterly' for lack of contributions!...just look at the table of contents above. Rod was the editor before Tom and I took it over, so his involvement has been never-ending. With the all-electronically produced Whirrakee (a far cry from the method 20 years ago), the next step-up might be an all-colour magazine, which could be sent out to members via e-mail. The committee is just investigating this possibility (see special request from Jan Orr, page 3) and I am encouraging all members to voice their opinion about this.*

Front page photographer: Joy Clusker
It looks like Phil Dyson is in his element, when showing very keen children (and some keen adults like Bev Culvenor) during the Family Nature Club excursion how the water level in the bores at Kamarooka is measured using a tape and a whistle. See page 9 and 11.

Short Notices

June Excursion
Saturday June 11 (long weekend)

Searching for Fungi in the Wombat Forest (near Bullarto)
Meet at the clubrooms at 9am to arrange car pooling and depart for Bullarto at 9:15am.
We intend to leave the forest to return home at 3:30pm and arrive back by 5pm.

As usual, be prepared for cold, wet (at least damp & usually muddy underfoot) conditions because we are entering the habitat of fungi, organisms which appreciate these conditions much better than we do. Wear warm clothes, a good raincoat, water-resistant shoes (or a change of shoes & socks & a garbage bag to put wet things in after you've changed). Generally, if you aim to be completely waterproof, you will also be able to stay nice and warm. Bring your lunch, morning & afternoon tea, camera, binoculars etc, & something to sit on to keep you off the damp ground. It's usually a very interesting way to spend the day in an impressive forest.

For some helpful hints on photographing fungi in dark, damp conditions, see page 8.

June Garden Working Bee

Saturday June 4th at 1pm

We will be doing some planting of new plants to enhance the garden and possibly spreading some mulch. It will probably go for a couple of hours and we'll finish with a cuppa. If anyone can bring planting tools, gloves etc that would be great. We hope to have some barrows and tools to help with the mulch. These tasks may carry over to the next sessions.

Advance notice for the next working bee Saturday 2nd July, also at 1pm,

Family Nature Club Activity
The Family Nature Club activity for June (Sunday, June 19th, 10 am - 12 noon) will focus on 'Fungi - Little Rotters!'. Venue is still to be decided but will be local/in town and families will be told where to meet when they register by email or phone. The Leaders will be Joy Clusker & Rod Orr. Everyone will need to come dressed for cold & wet weather because these conditions suit Fungi very well. All members are very welcome to come and assist in running the activity.

Special Request to all members
Those members who have an e-mail address, can you please let us have this address for future contact with you - the reason for this request from the Committee is that in the future, we may be able to send issues of the *Whirrakee* electronically to those members who would prefer this option. If this is possible (need to work on file size reduction), we would be able to counter the anticipated increases in printing and postage costs and so maintain the membership subscription at its current level.
An effective way of letting us know your email address is to send Jan Orr an email at: Jan.Orr@westnet.com.au and please let us know if you would like to try this method of receiving the *Whirrakee*. Otherwise, you could talk to a member of the Committee to express your opinion on this proposal.

Atlas of Living Australia: data collection
The CSIRO is looking for data for any living species in Australia to add to the Atlas of Living Australia website. Images are also welcome. All contributions are acknowledged and contributors retain ownership of any data or images that they share. Interested people can contact:
Briony Cowper,
Data Liaison, Atlas of Living Australia
CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences
GPO Box 1700
Canberra ACT 2601
Email: briony.cowper@csiro.au
Web: http://www.ala.org.au/

The beauty of grasses Photographer: Rod Orr

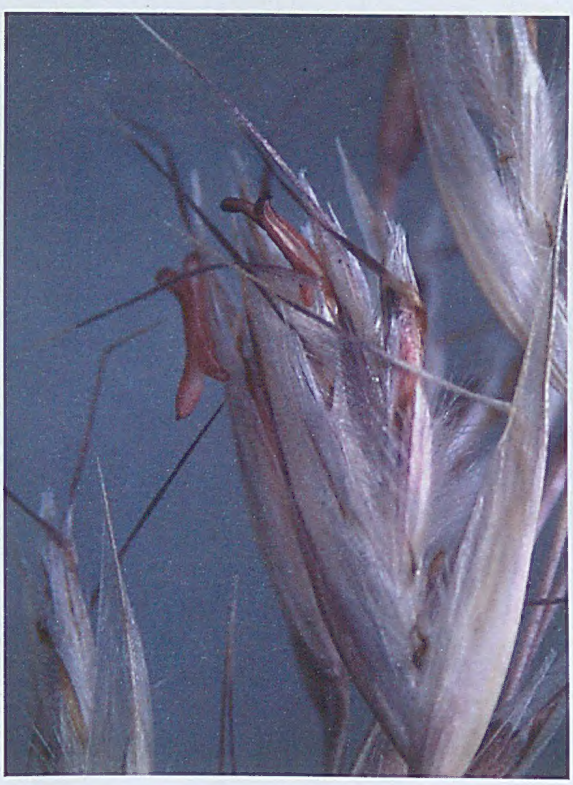
The grass identification workshop in April allowed members to get a good look at grass flowers and appreciate their exquisite beauty. These flowers are often overlooked due to their small size and lack of bright colours. Below are inflorescences of 4 grasses we encountered during that workshop.

Enneapogon nigricans,

Dichanthium sericeum, Silky Bluegrass

Austrodanthonia linkii, (Leafy) Wallaby Grass

Joycea pallida, Red-anther Wallaby Grass



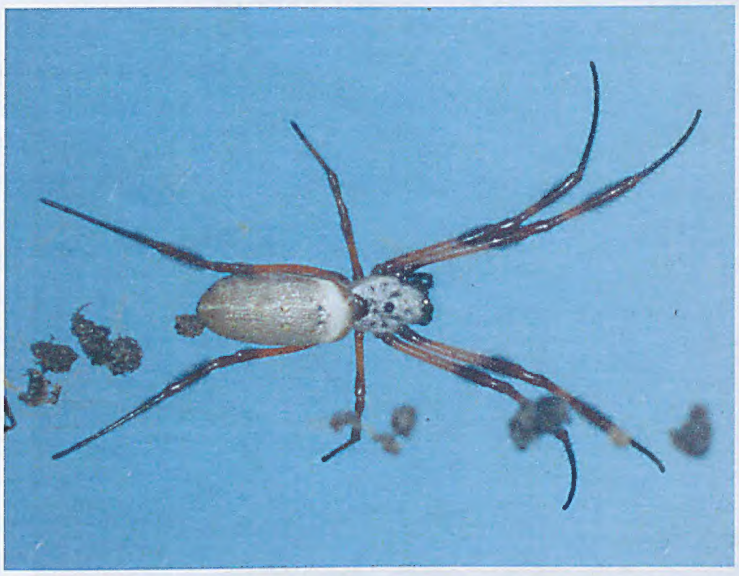
The season of fungi has well and truly started. Below is the Orange-peel Fungus (*Aleuria aurantia*), growing in the Wombat forest. It belongs to the cup-fungi (Ascomycetes) (Photographer: Rod Orr)

Jelly Fungi (*Calocera* sp.) in the Wombat Forest on a large tree that was colonized by many other species of fungi and moss (photographer: R.Orr)

Cordyceps meneristitus – this is a parasite on insect larvae (Photographer: Joy Clusker)

....if you would like to see more wonderful fungi, why not join the excursion on June 11? (see page 3)

Orb weavers and their webs



The images above (by Mal Haysom) and on the right (by David Salt) show the upper and lower sides of the familiar Golden Orb weaver, *Nephila edulis*. The one on the right is in the process of consuming a European wasp. Wasps (not European ones) are in fact major predators of orb weavers, they paralyse them to provide their larvae with fresh food.

Early morning at Lake Mungo (Photographer: Ian Flecknoe-Brown)

These are long-tailed sawfly larvae (*Pterygophorus* sp.) on a Red Box leaf, photographed in mid-April. Sawflies are actually not true flies, but are closely related to wasps. Many of them look like big wasps without a 'waist'. Male sawflies are pollinators of our local duck orchids, but I am unsure of this species' involvment.

A delicate lacewing, with see-through white patches on its wings. Looking at the Australian Museum website, this looks very much like the Hairy-winged Lacewing, *Porismus strigatus*. See http://australianmuseum.net.au/Lacewings-and-Antlions-Order-Neuroptera

This huge caterpillar spun a yellow cocoon, secured with lemon threads, as soon as it was put in a box. I hope Glenise will inform us about what came out of that.

May Notes and Observations

compiled by Rod Orr

Special Announcements:
Jenny Shield announced a number of updates on the 'Spiders of Bendigo' book and other taxonomic spider developments. The list of amendments is enclosed in this *Whirrakee*.
Judy Crocker - thinning operations are currently being conducted in the Shelborne forest.
Bendigo City - Thematic Env History project - initial invitation to contribute. Rod & Jan, Kerrie & Bev Culvenor will attend.

Notes & Reports
Kerrie Norris - reported on the last Family Nature Club activity - Bird Watching at Kennington Reservoir - well attended, broad interest shown, well supported by our members.
June activity - Fungi & sketching

Garden News
Matthew Comer had six helpers last Saturday - garden is looking quite good at the moment. June 4 at 1pm will be next weeding & planting & mulching. It would be good to have an Email list for garden contacts.

Observations
Kerrie Norris: Kerrie has provided more detail on the Olive Legless Lizards, which were discovered at Kangaroo Gully, Kangaroo Flat last month (April 3rd). These reptiles appeared suddenly from the lower level of a stone pile, which was being dug into. Unfortunately, 2 of these lizards died after contact with the shovel - the first one was mistaken for a Brown Snake.

John Lindner observed a flock of about 20 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos which erupted from small pines in Andrews Street, White Hills (April 11, 2011). They had been feeding on the cones. The pines were not *Pinus radiata*. The birds had been quite silent as he approached on a bicycle. They split into 2 groups and flew only a short distance. Half an hour later when John returned, the birds had not come back to the pines. On May 6th, in the evening at Heywood St. White Hills at the crest of the white hills, a group of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew northwards at low altitude. They landed in trees near the road and some went down briefly to drink at a dam. There are many pines just North of Heywood Street.

Annette Mouat: More than 20 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were seen in the Fadersons' Lane area (8:30 am, April 30th). They slowly passed by, stopping for a couple of minutes in old pine trees and the tops of Grey Box trees. They were spread out and within 10 minutes they had all passed by.
Also, on April 25th, Eastern Spinebills returned to our garden again after an absence of 3 - 4 months. For about 10 years during the drought, they stayed all through the year.

Hints on photographing fungi
(in preparation for the June excursion)
by Rod Orr

Remember the usual advice for taking good photos in these conditions - the fungi don't move at all while they are being photographed so you can use long exposures in the low light of the forest, provided you know how to control your camera and have brought something stable to rest it on while the photo is being taken (tripod, block of wood, small bean bag - are all good solutions). The fungi are usually small and very close to the ground so either one of a ground-sheet or a piece of plastic is good to have - then you can kneel or even lie down in relative comfort on the damp ground while the camera is being focussed on the fungus.

Of course, you can use the camera's flash unit to take a hand-held photo as usual, but you'd need to play around with exposure compensation (read the camera's manual for instructions about how to do this with your camera) to avoid an unnaturally lit fungus shining brightly against an almost black background. If you want to take a more naturally lit photo of these little gloom-

dwellers, then you need to find out how to turn off the automatic flash in your camera and use one of the techniques, suggested above, for keeping your camera absolutely still while it is taking the photo.

Family Nature Club activity at Kamaraooka

by Rod Orr
(to accompany the photos on page 11)

On Sunday 22nd May, the Family Nature Club joined with the CMA for an excursion to the farm forestry plantation of the Northern United Forestry Group (NUFG) to mark Salt Watch Week and to hear more about their successes in re-vegetating severely salt-affected farming land.

Photo 4. (over the page) shows us standing in an area where the surface soil had lost its structure and been blown away, leaving salty clay subsoil. This has now been re-vegetated to some extent by planting rows of Old Man Saltbush which is able to provide occasional grazing for sheep so that some production is now possible from this area. Considerable protection of the soil is evident close to the salt-tolerant plants, which now have grasses and other vegetation growing around them, where before, there were only bare salt-scalded patches of subsoil.

Salt-tolerant trees and shrubs had also been planted in other less severely salt-affected sections and were generally growing well. There had been a noticeable increase in the biodiversity of the areas now used for farm forestry plantations. Harvesting will preserve the already established trunks and roots of the trees which will be selectively cut for useful timber - these stumps will then be allowed to grow back by coppicing and the coppice managed selectively to continue productive growth from all parts of the managed plantation.
Several *Acacia* species had been planted in rows throughout the plantation - some could eventually be harvested selectively for wood but many would also provide an economic return by producing large quantities of seed which would be sold. Of course, in the meantime, the acacias are also improving the nitrogen content of the soil where they are growing.

At first glance, photo 4. could be taken somewhere in central Australia - orange-red, salt-affected soil, salt tolerant vegetation, wide open flat land - but it's only 30 to 45 minutes drive North of Bendigo.
As can be seen, we came prepared for wet weather - there were initially 25 children booked in (together with their parents and friends) to attend, but some families obviously reconsidered when they looked at the sky and heard the thunder before they left home (the sky was indeed a spectacle in itself, see photos 1. and 2. over the page). Still, 10 children from the Family Nature Club did attend with their parents and although it did rain on us after we had been shown around by the Northern United Forestry Group's members and CMA staff, everyone seemed to have a very enjoyable and educational morning. Thanks to Phil Dyson, Cass Davis and their helpers who organised the activities and presentations and the NUFGroup for providing morning tea and the BBQ lunch we were all kept occupied, interested and well fed. We all drove back to Bendigo slightly damp but very satisfied with the morning's activities.

Phil Dyson has put up a summary from Cass Davies (and there might also be some photos in the near future) on the NUFG website. See http://www.nufg.org.au/national_saltwatchweek_2011_visi.htm

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, June 8 7.30pm
Dr Pam Whiteley (Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Melbourne) will talk about 'Wildlife health surveillance in Victoria'

Wednesday, July 13 7.30pm
A joint presentation by Dr Jason Goodger and Ms Allison Heskes (PhD candidate), both from the School of Botany, University of Melbourne: 'Botanical imaging in the 21st century: using lasers to unravel the mysteries of essential oil glands in eucalypts'.

Excursion

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It's usually a very interesting way to spend the day in an impressive forest.
For hints on photographing fungi, see page 8.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Biodiversity Across the Borders Conference
The conference will be held at the Mt. Helen campus of the University of **Ballarat - 9th June, 2011.** Details in the May *Whirrakee*.

Bendigo Family Nature Club
Many hands are needed on the days, so if you can help out, please contact Jan Orr. All activities will be held on 3rd Sunday of the month.

The Family Nature Club activity for June (Sunday, June 19th, 10 am - 12 noon) will focus on 'Fungi - Little Rotters!'. Venue is still to be decided but will be local/in town and families will be told where to meet when they register by email or phone.
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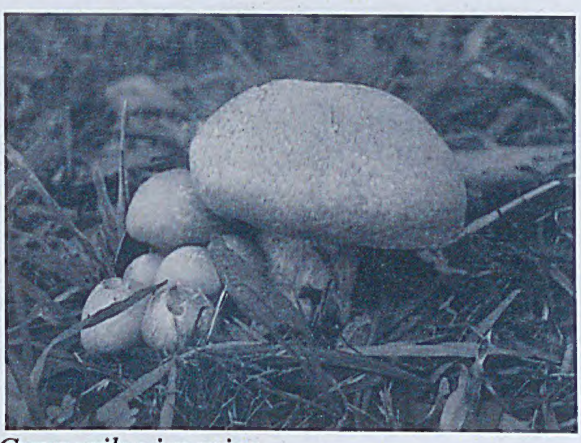
It's fungi-season...



Gymnopilus junonius
(Photographer: Joy Clusker)

More from Kamarooka

The day started at 10am with an interesting and slightly ominous looking sky. One very long and bulging cloud seemed to divide the sky (photo 1.). Amazingly, seemingly the same front was also seen at Lake Mungo some three hours earlier on that day (photo 2.).

1. Photographer: Joy Clusker

2. Photographer: Ian Flecknoe-Brown

3. Lunch time at the Kamarooka Salt-watch morning - just before it started to rain. Cass Davies (CMA) and NUFG members had organized a barbeque and a shelter, both of which were much appreciated.
Ten minutes after this shot was taken, everybody was under the tent!

There really were 10 children there, but just not all in the one spot at the same time!

4. Weather-proof observers learning more about revegetation of salt-affected farming land at Kamarooka. The plant in the foreground is Old Man Saltbush, *Atriplex nummularia*. Sheep like it, and it also manages to grow with its feet, at times, in highly saline water. In addition, this worst affected area still supports some grasses and thus much of the soil is now held in place, even through the dry summer months. (photographer: Jan Orr)